A MONUMENT

TO

LaVerendrye

The Discoverer of the West



LE MANITOBA Printing Co.
St. Boniface, Man.
1913

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The members of the Committee of La Vérendrye Monument beg to submit that in the annexed appeal to the public, they briefly sum up the glorious achievements of the Pathfinder of the West and his just claim upon the gratitude of Canadian people.

We refer to the letters of some of the most prominent citizens of Winnipeg cordially endorsing the patriotic move of our Committee, as an expression of public opinion.

We have raised so far $3,000 and secured a site for the Monument valued at $50,000.

The Monument itself will cost, at the lowest figure, $30,000, and probably more, besides the necessary expenses connected with that enterprise.

It will be erected at St. Boniface, near the banks of the Red River, facing the City of Winnipeg, in close proximity of the new Broadway bridge now under construction. It will stand about the centre of a park of the City of St. Boniface, thus becoming the property of that City and opened to the public at large.

We wish to emphasize the fact that La Vérendrye, whilst entitled to be looked upon as a great Benefactor of Canada in general, can lay a special claim upon five provinces of the Dominion. He was born and he died in the province of Quebec. He erected three forts in Ontario and lost his missionary, his eldest son and nineteen of his employees on Massacre Island, lake of the Woods.

He and his sons visited the three western provinces, building forts, trading with the Indians and travelling across our prairies until they reached the first peaks of the Rocky Mountains.

We therefore submit that it is only fitting that the Dominion Government should give a substantial aid to such a meritorious object.

Hoping that our petition will be favorably entertained,

We remain,

Yours faithfully,

L. A. Prud'homme,
President.

Rev. Denys Lamy,
Sec.-Treasurer.

St. Boniface, Man., October 4th, 1913.

A Monument to La Verendrye

The Discoverer of the West

APPEAL TO THE PUBLIC

The late Archbihop Taché, who was an admirer of the pioneers of the West, took a deep interest in La Vérendrye, the discoverer of Manitoba and of all our Western plains to the Rocky Mountains.

In 1877 His Grace had selected a plot of ground at the western extremity of La Vérendrye street, in St. Boniface, near the Red River, on which to erect a monument to the hero. Later he reconsidered his choice, and, acting in this with the chief citizens of the town, he selected a site opposite the old Provencher Academy. On the 24th of June, 1886, he blessed the blocks of granite destined, in his mind, to become the base of the proposed monument. They are still there awaiting the statue so ardently desired by the great prelate.

So worthy an enterprise could not be allowed to collapse. "La Société Historique de Saint-Boniface" (The Historical Society of St. Boniface) is now reviving it from its slumber of some 25 years. On the 12th of January last, at a meeting held at the Archbishop's Palace, it was decided to erect the monument and a committee was appointed to raise the necessary funds by appealing to the patriotism and generosity of all admirers of the glorious discoverer of the Canadian West. This meeting was presided over by His Grace the Archbishop of St. Boniface, who has shown right along such zeal in promoting, at the cost of great sacrifices, those expeditions which finally brought about the discovery of Fort St. Charles.

Born at Three Rivers, on November 17th, 1685, Pierre Gauthier de Varennes, Sieur de La Vérendrye, began his explorations in the West in 1731 and pushed deeper inland in the following years, erecting several Forts as he advanced. In 1742, his two sons, under his direction,

went as far as the great Rockies. The intrepid explorer pursued this work until 1744, when a dearth of funds and the intrigues of hostile traders compelled him to abandon the great work to which he had devoted thirteen years of stupendous labor. His discoveries had cost him a substantial private fortune and the loss of one of his sons, massacred by the blood-thirsty Sioux, along with nineteen other Frenchmen and Father Aulneau, S.J.

Like the great Columbus he reaped but misfortunes and ingratitude. His noble intentions were travested, and French Court partly acknowledged but late the worth of this hero, awarding him in 1748 the Cross of the Military Order of St. Louis and a captaincy in the army. Six weeks later he died at Montreal, as he was about to set out anew for the far West. He now rests in the vaults of Notre Dame church.

These brief outlines of the career of the first explorer of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and the North West Territories give but a feeble insight into the noble character of that indomitable hero teeming with energy and patriotism. His intrepidity as an explorer was only equalled by his wonderful tact in dealing with the Aborigines, those kings of the wilds, naturally suspicious and averse to all intrusions into their domains on the part of the Pale-faces.

It is high time that such great and noble merits be publickly recognized and in some way repaid. Now that such a prodigious progress has set in, now that luxury has replaced desolation, the fortunate heirs of this great explorer's toils and labors owe him, we think, the reward of a monument.

Mr. Charles N. Bell, of Winnipeg, wrote to the Honorable Senator, T. A. Bernier, in December 1885, the following suggestive lines : "I have the highest admiration for the striking courage, the perseverance and patriotism of La Vérendrye. To my mind his name ought to be redeemed from oblivion. His Grace Archbishop Taché informed me last year that it was his intention to erect a monument or marble slab to commemorate the exploits of La Vérendye... I should be most happy to contribute as far as I

possibly can to the realization of such a plan, and I feel assured that an appeal to them would meet with a cordial response on the part of my English-speaking fellow-citizens interested in the history of the country."

These words from the pen of a broad-minded English-speaking citizen we think deserving of the consideration of all the various races now enjoying in this new land the fruit of La Vérendrye's labors. A nation honors itself when it honors its heroes.

Most likely the near future will see a monument arise in Winnipeg to commemorate the illustrious name of her founder, the noble Lord Selkirk ; and no element of our population will, we trust, be backward in contributing to such an undertaking ; certainly not the French-Canadians to whom the noble Lord ever manifested so much kindness and benevolence. And while honoring the hero who contributed so much to the development of this country no one would wish to leave in oblivion that other hero who was the first to tread this Western soil.

The city of St. Boniface has been chosen for the erection of La Vérendrye's monument since her citizens are more interested perhaps in this hero and have taken the initiative in this work 35 years ago, and owing to the fact that in point of time St. Boniface is the oldest town in the West.

Our appeal is not confined merely to the people residing within the limits of the territories that owe their discovery to La Vérendrye, but goes out to all Canadians interested in our national heroes.

The subscription list is now open for La Vérendrye's monument. All contributions will kindly be addressed to the undersigned Secretary-Treasurer. It is not our intention to hamper in any way private initiative, yet we mean to be held responsible only for any sum or sums directly sent to us, of which we shall duly acknowledge reception.

THE COMMITTEE OF THE LA VÉRENDRYE MONUMENT.

L. A. PRUD'HOMME, *President.*

REV. DENYS LAMY, *Sec.-Treas.*

St. Boniface, Man., January, 26, 1912.

HIS GRACE ARCHBISHOP MATHESON

BISHOP'S COURT, WINNIPEG, MAN., SEPT. 12, 1913.

MY DEAR SIR,

I have learned with great satisfaction that the Historical Society of St. Boniface has undertaken to erect a monument to Lavérendrye, the discoverer of our country, the first white man to set foot on the banks of the Red River. The Society is to be congratulated on its enterprise, which ought to commend itself to our citizens generally. It was your Society, I understand, that had the good fortune to discover, on the shores of the Lake of the Woods, Fort St. Charles, founded by Lavérendrye and to find the remains of his oldest son. It is fitting, therefore, that the same Society should lead in an effort to erect, in the historic City of St. Boniface, a monument to that illustrious Frenchman. Steps are being taken to raise a memorial to Lord Selkirk in Winnipeg. If the two enterprises are carried to completion the two monuments will salute each other from each side of the River and be a pleasing evidence that, under the British Flag, great men, to whatever nationality they belong, may find fitting recognition of their merits.

I wish your Historical Society all the success it deserves in its enterprise and shall be glad to do my best to help it in every way possible to me. I am,

Very truly yours,

S. P. RUPERT'S LAND.

THE SEC. HISTORICAL SOCIETY,
OF ST. BONIFACE,
ST. BONIFACE, MAN.,

MR. T. R. DEACON, MAYOR OF WINNIPEG

MAYOR'S OFFICE, WINNIPEG, APRIL 10TH, 1913.

HIS HONOR JUDGE PRUD'HOMME,
ST. BONIFACE, MAN.

YOUR HONOR,

I have your letter of the 9th. instant, re proposed monument to Sieur de La Vérendrye, and I have the very greatest pleasure in assuring you of my most hearty co-operation in this matter.

I look upon those three great explorers, La Vérendrye, Père Marquette and La Salle, as almost the equal of any explorers of whom we have record anywhere and their names and particularly La Vérendrye's, are well worthy of being cherished in the highest respect by the people who have profited so much by their exploration.

I remain, Your Honor,
Very respectfully,

THOS. R. DEACON, MAYOR.

MR. THOMAS BERRY, MAYOR OF ST. BONIFACE

MAYOR'S OFFICE, ST. BONIFACE, APRIL 17TH, 1913.

MY DEAR SIR,

I am in receipt of your favour of the 9th. instant, with regard to the proposed erection of a monument to the Discoverer of the West, Sieur de La Vérendrye.

This move is a most noble one, and those promoting it cannot be but complimented on their work which, I

have no doubt, will receive the hearty support of at least all Canadian Westerners, among whom I am proud to count myself.

Believe me, my dear Sir,
Yours very truly,

THOMAS BERRY, MAYOR.

HONORABLE L .A. PRUD'HOMME,
PRESIDENT OF THE COMMITTEE,
ST. BONIFACE, MAN.

HONORABLE JUDGE ROBSON,
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSIONER

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION.

WINNIPEG, 19 APL. 1913.

NOEL BERNIER, ESQ., WINNIPEG,

DEAR SIR,

I thank you for the opportunity of expressing an opinion regarding the proposed La Vérendrye Monument.

I am heartily in favor of the proposal and trust it may at an early date be successfully carried out.

Sincerely yours,

H. A. ROBSON.

HONORABLE W. H. MONTAGUE

WINNIPEG, APRIL 17TH, 1913.

DEAR SIR,

I beg to acknowledge your letter of April 15th, touching the proposed Monument to La Vérendrye the Explorer.

In reply let me say I have always been of the opinion that there is no better way of creating and maintaining a national spirit so necessary in the building of a nation than the honouring of great men in the various walks of national life by erecting memorials to them.

To such explorers as La Vérendrye Canada owes much.

Yours faithfully,

W. H. MONTAGUE.

NOEL BERNIER, ESQ.
Bernier, Blackwood & Bernier,
Portage Avenue, Winnipeg.

SIR HUGH J. MACDONALD, K.B.

WINNIPEG, 30TH. SEPT. 1912.

HIS HONOUR JUDGE PRUD'HOMME,
President of the La Vérendrye Monument Committee,
St. Boniface, Manitoba.

DEAR JUDGE PRUD'HOMME,

I am in receipt of your favour of the 26th inst., respecting the erection of a Monument to La Vérendrye, the Discoverer of our Canadian West, and am glad to learn that you have already succeeded in raising such a large amount by way of subscriptions. I can only say that I

am most heartily in accord with the object, which your Committee has in view, as I think it but fitting that the memory of La Vérendrye should be perpetuated and his great services recognized in some substantial way, and I can think of no way more fitting than a monument to him. If it had not been for him the great Prairie Section of Canada would have long remained undiscovered, and Canada and the Empire might have lost a country, which, in the future, will afford comfortable homes to millions of British subjects.

Wishing your project every success, I remain,

Yours very sincerely,

HUGH J. MACDONALD.

SIR WILLIAM WHITE, K.B.

WINNIPEG, APRIL 11TH, 1913.

DEAR JUDGE PRUD'HOMME,

I have received yours of the 9th instant informing me that a committee has been appointed for the purpose of erecting a monument to the great explorer and discoverer of the West.

I sincerely trust that the efforts of the committee will meet with success and that a monument worthy of the Great Explorer will soon be an accomplished fact. In this active commrecial age in which we are living we are very apt to overlook matters of a historical character, i.e., to commemorate the names of those who did so much for the Canadian West, especially in its earlier years.

Yours very truly,

W. WHYTE.

JUDGE PRUD'HOMME,
ST. BONIFACE, MAN.

MR. J. A. M. AIKINS, M.P. (For Brandon)

HOUSE OF COMMONS, OTTAWA, DEC. 2, 1912.

DEAR MR. BERNIER,

Re La Vérendrye Monument

I have your letter of the 28th ultimo and thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

All those who know anything of the energy and enterprise of La Vérendrye and have the ability will, I am sure, support the suggestion of doing honour to his memory by erecting a monument to him in a conspicuous place in St. Boniface. Not only will this be a proper tribute to him but it will be a constant lesson to all our young citizens who see it that such courage, effort and public spirit as he showed will be a benefit not only to them but to all succeeding generations and will be appreciated by those generations.

Until I know the cost of the monument and what others are contributing, I cannot very well apportion, out of the remnant of my benevolent account for this year, the sum to be given for this purpose. I hope to get these details later.

Yours sincerely,

J. A. M. AIKINS.

NOEL BERNIER, ESQ.,
Bernier, Blackwood & Bernier,
Winnipeg, Man.

MR. W. SANFORD EVANS, (Former Mayor of Wpg.)

WINNIPEG, 8TH MAY, 1913.

NOEL BERNIER, ESQ.,

Bernier, Blackwood & Bernier,
401 Somerset Block, City.

MY DEAR SIR,

I would like to subscribe myself as being heartily in favor of the establishment of a worthy monument to La Vérendrye. It is surely our duty to mark in some fitting way our appreciation of the work of the discoverer of the west and I feel certain your committee can rely upon the support of all good citizens.

Yours truly,

W. SANFORD EVANS.

MR. ALFRED J. ANDREWS, K.C.

(Former Mayor of Winnipeg.)

WINNIPEG, APRIL 11, 1913.

NOEL BERNIER, ESQ.,

BARRISTER,

WINNIPEG,

DEAR SIR,

I have your favor of the 10th inst., respecting the La Vérendrye monument, and heartily approve of the erection of same, and as the matter is entirely one of public interest, would commend your suggestion that both the Dominion and Provincial Governments should be invited

to contribute. In fact, it is a work that should be undertaken, in my opinion, wholly by them as representing the whole of the people.

Yours faithfully,

ALFRED J. ANDREWS.

MR. J. P. ROBERTSON, Provincial Librarian.

PROVINCIAL LIBRARY, WINNIPEG, OCT. 7TH, 1912.

HONORABLE L. A. PRUD'HOMME,
COUNTY COURT JUDGE,
ST. BONIFACE, MAN.

DEAR JUDGE PRUD'HOMME,

I have your favor of the 25th. ultimo, re the action of a committee interested in erecting a monument to La Vérendrye, the discoverer of the Canadian West.

I may say at the outset that this project has my entire sympathy, as have all other projects that have a tendency to preserve the memory of those intrepid explorers who have done so much to develop the Great Lone Land.

I was pleased to note that you had already obtained a fair subscription towards this purpose, and I trust that this sum may be largely augmented. I can see no reason why both the Dominion and Provincial Governments should not contribute generously to such a patriotic purpose as that which your Committee has in view. I should most assuredly be pleased to learn of the success of the project you have in view, and with best wishes for success, I remain

Yours faithfully,

J. P. ROBERTSON,
Provincial Librarian.

MR. DANIEL McINTYRE, Superintendent of Schools.

WINNIPEG, 28TH APRIL, 1913.

MR. R. GOULET,

ST. BONIFACE, MAN.,

DEAR MR. GOULET,

I am very strongly in favor of any movement looking towards the perpetuation of the memory of La Vérendrye's achievements by a suitable monument. His will always be one of the great names in the history of the development of the Canadian West. I am,

Sincerely yours,

D. McINTYRE.

MR. SIDNEY E. LANG, Inspector of Secundary Schools.

WINNIPEG, 28TH APRIL, 1913.

THE SECRETARY

OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY,

ST. BONIFACE, MAN.,

DEAR SIR,

The project which your Society has in hand, the erection of a monument to La Vérendrye is surely one that should appeal strongly to every good Canadian, at any rate to every native born Canadian who takes an intelligent interest in the history of his country. La Vérendrye was certainly one of the great Canadians, and a worthy monument should be set up to commemorate his life and deeds. He deserves a memorial if anyone deserves it in this western country. I hope you will have every success.

I trust that the monument may be of such a character as to engage the attention of our people and particularly the young people in La Vérendrye's life and achievements, and that as a result his true place on the roll of Canadian heroes may be recognized by all. No better educational work can be undertaken than that of impressing upon the minds of our youth some knowledge of the lives of the great-hearted men of an earlier generation who were the discoverers and first explorers of our western prairies. Such knowledge is bound to awaken good aspiration and assist in forming potent ideals of life and conduct. No one can measure the educational value of a memorial of the kind you propose, which by its concrete form will constantly remind us of the men who led the way into our splendid Canadian West.

I am, dear Sir,
Yours very truly,

SIDNEY E. LANG.

MR. R. M. SIMPSON, M.D.

WINNIPEG, JULY 16, 1913.

DEAR JUSTICE PRUD'HOMME,

I understand a movement has been set on foot to erect some suitable monument to the memory of Pierre Gauthier de Varennes de la Vérendrye—a movement which should be welcomed and supported by all true Canadians, not only because honor is being meted out where honor is due, not only because another name becomes more clearly blazoned on our scroll of national fame, but, also, because the story of one more brave man will become a household fable in our land, a story full of romance and adventure, yet the real life story of a man whose qualities of character have always been embodied in the ideal of manhood.

For us in the West, de la Vérendrye should be the best known of all the early explorers. What La Salle and

Champlain did for the East, de la Vérendrye did for the West. Pierre La Vérendrye's character, like that of most great explorers, was a curious mixture of the Merchant, the Mystic, the Adventurer and the Aesthetic.

Born at Three Rivers, his inclination toward a life of adventure was early manifested. After having served in the Army in Canada, he crossed over to the Old Country and distinguished himself by his gallant behaviour all through the campaign in the War of the Spanish Succession. Coming back to Canada, he was placed in charge of a Fort on the North Shore of Lake Superior, and here he first felt the call of that mysterious land which lay there away to the West, the call which he was to spend his life in trying to answer.

It is strange that so many of the dreams of Western Explorers have been shattered only to unfold possibilities, the bare possibility of which they never conceived. Columbus set out to go to China, and found America, La Salle, bound on the same errand, explored the Valley of the Mississippi, La Vérendrye, his imagination stirred by the vague tales of an old Indian Chief of a great mountainous country far away to the West, beyond which lay the great lake whose waters could not be drunk, thought at once that he was on the track of that "Great Western Sea", in which so many of the Early French Explorers implicitly believed—the Sea which lay like a narrow strait between America and Japan.

He started out on his voyage of discovery under royal authority, and associated with him were a number of Merchants in Montreal.

Disaster followed the little party from the first. By the Fall they had established a Fort on one of the Islands in the Lake of the Woods, but were disappointed in not receiving the expected supplies from the partners in Montreal. Winter found them practically without supplies. Blow after blow fell upon him. Scarcity of food was causing disruption among the men. His nephew, de la Jemmeraie, who had been his lieutenant, died, and his eldest son together with a missionary and a band of voyageurs were all massacred by the Sioux while on a trip

back to Michillimakinak for supplies. Despite such terrible hardships, the brave man grimly pushed on, and September, 1738, found him ascending the Red River—the first white man to arrive at the spot where Winnipeg now stands.

Establishing a Fort on the present site of Portage la Prairie, he and his sons continued their explorations, establishing Forts throughout the West, and penetrating as far as the Rockies.

Full of difficulties and the most severe hardships, as his way was, he was, also, continually subject to the meanest and most insidious attacks at home, and was compelled to return to Quebec to defend himself, but a life full of adversity proved too much for him, and he died on the eve of his departure to continue his work.

It is indeed fitting that Westerners should join to do honor to this great explorer. He it was who unlocked this vast treasure house which had lain hidden so long, and whose riches he himself even never realized. True type of the pioneers who were to come, strong, brave, resourceful, full of courage and hope, type of the spirit which we must have in this great land of ours if we are to unfold the great possibilities whose very existence he discovered for us. Let his memory be cherished as our first great pioneer. Let this man's life and work become part of the folk love of our Country, let it be told to our Babes in our Nursery, and our Children in our Schools, let monuments be erected so that our Children and Children's Children may ask, "What meaneth this Monument," and the story will be told again and again, and the coward will become brave, the weak will become strong.

Yours faithfully,

R. M. Simpson.

The Hon. Justice Prud'homme,
St. Boniface, Manitoba.